OCT 1 8 2006



October 18, 2006

Ms. Patricia N. Daniels, Director Supplemental Food Programs, FNS/USDA 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Ms. Daniels:

We are writing to generally support USDA's proposed WIC Food Packages Rule. While we believe the rule will improve the health and nutritional quality of the foods in the program, expand cultural food options, and increase participants' choices, we are concerned that the adherence to arbitrary revenue-neutral guidelines limit the ability of families to meet the nutritional requirements defined by the most up-to-date science.

Given that the Administration's proposed massive tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans are far from revenue-neutral, we find it highly ironic that the efforts to modernize the WIC Program — which should require very meager additional investments to ensure that low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants, and children have the nutrition assistance that hard science tells us they need — are required by the same Administration to be revenue neutral. Such a policy neither promotes compassion nor ensures homeland security.

We commend USDA for updating the WIC food packages to reflect the Dietary Guidelines and current nutritional science by adding fruits and vegetables, whole grain bread, corn tortillas, whole grain rice and other whole grains, the option of soymilk and tofu, and moving to only low-fat milk and whole grain cereals. Since the food packages were last revised, there has been an explosion of knowledge related to nutrition and health, as well as a growing obesity problem in this country. The addition of fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and other improvements in the new WIC food packages, will strengthen WIC's positive role to help mothers and children maintain a healthy weight and allow them to make healthy food choices. This will help nutritionally vulnerable children form healthy eating habits from an early age.

Moreover, we applaud USDA's proposed improvements for infants, breastfeeding women, and medically fragile participants. The introduction of fruits and vegetables as baby food for older infants will provide healthy foods the family might not otherwise be able to afford. The new enhanced food package for breastfeeding women should help WIC to promote breastfeeding. The new rule also will provide welcome relief for families struggling to pay for essential nutrition products for women and children with special nutritional needs. To ensure that WIC participants can get the full value from the new WIC food packages, we offer the following recommendations to strengthen the proposed rule:

#### Increase the Fruit and Vegetable Benefits to Fully Meet the Institute of Medicine.

USDA should make the value of the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit consistent with the IOM's recommendation to provide \$10 per month of fruits and vegetables for women and \$8 for children. The proposal gives children only three quarters of the amount of fruit and vegetables the Institute of Medicine (IOM) determined was necessary for a nutritionally sound children's WIC food package. Children receive \$8 in fruits and vegetables in the food package recommended by the IOM, but the USDA package provides only \$6. For women the proposed rule provides only \$8 in fruits and vegetables rather than the \$10 recommended by the IOM.

#### Allow WIC Participants to Choose the Fruits and Vegetables They Want and Can

WIC participants should be allowed to use the WIC food vouchers to select the fruits and vegetables that provide the best nutritional value, best bargain and best choice for themselves and their children. The rule should not give State agencies the authority to set state limits on the variety of fruits and vegetables participants are allowed to purchase with WIC vouchers. The successful WIC fruit and vegetable pilots allowed WIC participants full choice.

#### The Value of the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit Must Keep Pace with Inflation.

The rule must <u>require</u> that the value of the fruit and vegetable benefit reflect a cost of living adjustment. It is unfortunate that the cost of living adjustment in the proposed rule is optional. Without an annual cost of living adjustment, the vouchers would be worth less and would buy smaller amounts of fruit and vegetables each year as inflation increases — further falling behind the IOM recommendations.

## Adopt Appropriate Standards for Whole Grain Cereals to Assure Access to Healthy and Culturally Acceptable Choices.

We applaud USDA for preserving the nutritionally important sugar limit and important iron requirements for WIC cereals. However, the new proposed cereal grain standards create a significant barrier for WIC participants to consuming whole grain cereals. The proposed whole grain cereal standard is not an appropriate whole grain standard for bran, corn and rice cereals and consequently it eliminates defacto all bran, corn and rice WIC cereals. This is especially problematic for WIC because Hispanic families prefer corn-based cereals (for example corn flakes). The inclusion of whole grain corn-based cereals will be necessary to maintain acceptable cereal choices for the 2.5 million Hispanic women and children in WIC. Also, both corn and rice cereals provide a healthy option for WIC participants with allergies and bran cereals are an excellent source of much-needed fiber for participants. Therefore, to ensure a selection of healthy whole grain WIC cereals, we recommend the use of revised standards based on the whole grain standards used in USDA's Healthier U.S. Schools guidelines plus two additional alternative criteria of 1) at least 3 grams fiber for bran cereals and 2) a minimum of 8 grams whole grains.

#### The Allowable Size for a Loaf of Bread Must be Consistent with the Bread Available in Stores.

WIC participants need a whole grain bread voucher for a loaf of bread that is consistent with the size typically sold in stores. Otherwise, the purpose of the whole grain change is subverted and the value of the food package shrinks further. In many markets, a mother may not be able to buy any whole grain bread with a 1 pound bread voucher. The proposed rule lumps the size of a loaf of bread and grains together as 1 pound (16 ounces). This is fine for the grains (i.e. rice), which are sold by the pound, but bread is sold by the loaf. Whole grain loaves are heavy, usually weighing more than 1 pound. According to data from Interstate Bakeries, 56 percent of whole wheat/whole grain loaves are sold in a 24 ounce loaf and 25 percent are sold in a 20 ounce loaf.

#### Remove the Prescription Requirement for Soy Milk and Tofu.

We commend USDA for including the option of soy milk and tofu to provide popular high-calcium foods for WIC participants from a diversity of cultures. In addition, these foods are an important alternative for participants with milk allergies and lactose intolerance, a problem disproportionately affecting African-Americans and Asian-Americans. The new packages will work well for women because they have free access to choosing soy milk/tofu. However, the proposed requirement for a medical prescription for children to get soy milk or tofu should be removed because it presents an insurmountable barrier for most low-income WIC families.

#### **Keep Proposed Food Package Protections.**

We commend USDA for building in protections that safeguard the nutritional value of the new food packages for all participants by prohibiting state level cuts to the new food packages. In this proposed rule, USDA prohibits State WIC agencies from making across-the-board cuts in the food packages (a process known as "categorical tailoring"). This will guard against state pressures to dismantle the new WIC food packages. We agree with USDA that, given the carefully balanced food packages as designed by the Institute of Medicine, categorical tailoring is no longer necessary and would be detrimental. Individual WIC participants can have their WIC food package tailored for nutrition reasons or preference through the commonly used mechanism of "individual tailoring."

#### Maximize Access to Farmers' Markets.

USDA's inclusion of farmers' markets as vendors for the new WIC food package fruit and vegetable vouchers is commendable, and, along with the continuation and increased funding for the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program, will be helpful for WIC families.

The rule should make clear that farmers' markets qualify as eligible WIC vendors provided that they comply with the already well-established farmers' market or WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program procedures. WIC vendor requirements will need to allow farmers' markets to participate as seasonal vendors and exempt them from stocking the full package.

In summary, we strongly endorse the need for the new WIC food packages and urge USDA to proceed expeditiously to analyze the comments, make the necessary changes, and quickly move forward with the process of bringing a new, healthier food package to the more than 8 million women, infants and children in the WIC program each month. We strongly urge USDA to provide all the funding required to make the full range of improvements required by modern nutrition science.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our support for the new WIC food packages and our recommendations to make it stronger still.

Sincerely,

Executive Director
New York City Coalition Against Hunger

From: WebMaster@fns.usda.gov

Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2006 8:08 AM

To: WICHQ-SFPD

Subject: RevisionstoWICFoodPackages-Proposed Rule

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

CITY: Charleston

STATE: WV

ORGANIZATION: Kanawha Coalition for Community Health Improvement

CATEGORY: PublicInterest-AdvocacyGroup

OtherCategory:

Date: August 16, 2006 Time: 08:07:33 AM

#### **COMMENTS:**

I support the proposed changes to the WIC food package. This will make it easier for participants to include fruits and vegetables, as well as whole grains, to their diet. The inclusion of these foods will, hopefully, improve participant's nutrient intake.

Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2006 7:58 PM

To: WICHQ-SFPD

Subject: Docket ID number 0584-AD77, WIC FOOD PACKAGES RULE--

California Center for Public Health Advocacy, Davis, CA

Attachments: Comments--Docket ID Number 0584-AD77, WIC food packages rule, CCPHA.doc

Attached please find the California Center for Public Health Advocacy's comments on the proposed rules for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food packages, subject to the November 6, 2006 comment period.

Many thanks.

California Center for Public Health Advocacy Davis, CA 95617

The California Center for Public Health Advocacy raises awareness about public health issues and mobilizes communities to promote the establishment of effective health policies. We were established in 1999 by California's two public health associations—SCPHA and CPHA-N—as an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization.



**PI-3** 

RE: Docket ID Number 0584-AD77,

WIC Food Packages Rule

California Center for Public Health Advocacy—response to Public Comment

To Whom It May Concern:

The California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA) is in strong **SUPPORT** of the current language for the proposed rule for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food packages, subject to the November 6, 2006 comment period.

As proposed, changes to the regulations governing WIC food packages would align the food packages with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and current infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics. We believe these changes would significantly improve nutrition among lower income communities and have a positive impact on the health of WIC recipients by increasing healthy lifestyles and reducing risk for obesity.

The California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that raises awareness about critical public health issues and mobilizes communities to promote the establishment of effective state and local health policies. We were established in 1999 by California's two public health associations –SCPHA and CPHA-N. CCPHA uses tools of public health to design policy solutions to address critical public health challenges facing California today.

CCHPA is particularly pleased the proposed rules contain changes to add fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products to the food packages for the first time. In 2005 CCPHA conducted a study that shows the epidemic of overweight children in California continues to grow; the percentage of children in grades 5, 7, and 9 who were overweight in 2004 was 28.1 per 100 children. If we are to address problems such as diabetes and obesity—health issues that have reached epidemic proportions—it is essential that all individuals have increased access to healthy items, like fruits and vegetables. We view the updated food package rules as a potential solution to the growing problem—providing healthy guidelines and improved access to nutritious foods to children and families is a positive step towards preventing childhood obesity and obesity related illnesses.

We applaud the proposed changes to the WIC food packages governing regulations and urge timely implementation of the proposal. Implementing these updates to the WIC program ultimately will have a positive impact on the health of women, infants and children in California and the nation.

Sincerely,

California Center for Public Health Advocacy

#### OCT 1 8 2006

#### Economic Opportunity Commission of San Luis Obispo CHILD CARE RESOURCE CONNECTION

Patricia N. Daniels, Director Supplemental Food Programs Division Food and Nutrition Service, USDA 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, VA 22302 Pyry



October 17, 2006

Dear Ms. Daniels:

This letter is to thank USDA for its efforts in bringing the WIC food packages in closer alignment with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and with the feeding recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics for children less than 5 years of age.

We realize that the WIC Food Package Proposed Rule offers the most significant and substantive changes to the food packages since the Program's inception in 1974. We are pleased to see that the proposed changes add fruits and vegetables, whole grain bread and cereal products, soymilk, tofu and canned beans to the food packages. Other changes including the substitution of baby fruits and vegetables for juice in all infant food packages, greater quantities and a wider varieties of foods for exclusively breastfeeding mother/infant pairs, reduction of formula quantities to infants, and the elimination of whole milk options for adult participants and children 2 years and older have the potential to improve our services to families.

These proposed changes provide a greater variety of high nutrient food choices to the WIC participants, lowers saturated fat and cholesterol in the food packages, allow WIC to better meet the food preferences of its culturally diverse population, better support and promote breastfeeding, reinforce WIC's nutrition education messages, and are cost-neutral. As a sponsor of a Child Care Food Program, we look forward to seeing similar proposals and changes be incorporated into the Child and Adult Care Food Program regulations.

The revised food packages will help our nation's families establish healthy eating habits, which are key to preventing obesity, diabetes, heart and other nutritionally related diseases.

Although we support the WIC Food Package Proposed Rule, we strongly encourage USDA to re-evaluate the WIC food package on a more frequent interval (every 3-5 years) in the future using the most current evidence-based nutritional recommendations. This will allow WIC to continue to provide the most healthy foods to women and children during the most nutritionally vulnerable period of their lives.

We urge USDA to support and finalize the rule as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Children Services Manager

## Community Food Connections

OCT 1 8 2006

pt 5

October 15, 2006

Ms. Patricia N. Daniels, Director Supplemental Food Programs Division Food and Nutrition Service, USDA 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Dear Ms. Daniels:

As a community advocate who was responsible for bringing the Arizona Farmers Market Nutrition program to our state, I am writing in support of adding fruits and vegetables to the new WIC package, especially if WIC customers may be allowed to shop for them at farmers markets also.

The use of WIC food instruments for fresh locally grown produce will allow WIC participants to greatly increase their access to high-quality healthy food choices. With the introduction of fresh fruits and vegetables into the WIC food package, if they are allowed to be used at farmers markets, WIC will also be able to leverage the benefits to customers and small farmers alike of the Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

' **!**}- :}}

**Executive Director** 

September 12, 2006

Patricia Daniels

Director, Supplemental Food Programs Division Food and Nutrition Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, VA 22302 PI-6

RE: Docket ID Number 0584-AD77, WIC Food Packages Proposed Rule

Dear Ms. Daniels:

I am writing to strongly support the WIC Food Packages Proposed Rule calling for the addition of fruits and vegetables to the WIC food packages. I commend the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for proposing important changes to the WIC food packages that are more consistent with current dietary guidance such as the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. As a member of the South Carolina Coalition for Obesity Prevention Efforts (SCCOPE) dedicated to moving South Carolina towards a healthy weight, I applaud the agency for providing WIC moms and children with fruit and vegetable options through the use of vouchers that can be used to purchase all types of fruits and vegetables.

As you proceed through the rulemaking process, please consider the following suggestions:

#### Follow Institute of Medicine's Recommendations

Given that many WIC participants – and most South Carolinians consume less than one half of the fruits and vegetables recommended in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, WIC can play an important role in helping our citizens meet these guidelines. Adding more fruits and vegetables to the WIC food packages is especially critical to encouraging infants (through the addition of infant food fruits and vegetables), young children, and moms to establish positive dietary patterns conducive to good health. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables decreases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and certain cancers.

Because of the importance of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, I strongly encourage FNS to follow the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) Report: "WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change" and provide WIC moms and children with a \$10/month and \$8/month, respectively, cash-value voucher for fruits and vegetables. These amounts will help moms and kids eat at least one additional serving of fruit or vegetable each day – an important objective of the IOM.

#### Allow All Fruits and Vegetables

To maximize choice for WIC moms and kids, I fully support that *all* fruits and vegetables – fresh, canned and frozen (with appropriate limitations on fat, sugar and sodium) – qualify for purchase using the fruit and vegetable voucher.

WIC pilot projects conducted in California and New York successfully demonstrated that WIC moms will purchase a wide variety of nutrient dense fruits and vegetables when given a voucher specifically for fruits and vegetables. In addition, these projects demonstrated that WIC Moms highly valued their fruit and vegetable vouchers, resulting in a 90% redemption rate.

It is also critically important that the South Carolina state and local WIC agencies allow WIC moms and kids to have maximum choice in selecting fruits and vegetables to purchase using the vouchers. I do not recommend that WIC state agencies be allowed to restrict or limit choice of which fruits and vegetables are eligible for purchase with the cash-value vouchers. In addition, I suggest that WIC state agencies encourage vendors to provide a wide selection of nutritious fruits and vegetables for WIC moms and kids.

#### **Enhance Nutrition Education**

The importance of nutrition education is stressed throughout the proposed rule. I encourage FNS to urge state and local WIC agencies to emphasize increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in their nutrition education activities. Specifically, education should include information on:

- Why it is important to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day
- How to select fruits and vegetables that are nutrient dense, best seasonal buys, most economical, and convenient
- · Preparation tips and recipes
- Food safety tips

As a SCCOPE member concerned about the burden of obesity in and supportive of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, I look forward to an opportunity to work collaboratively with my colleagues in WIC agencies to develop and implement effective nutrition education programs.

In addition, with the creation of the new Fruits & Veggies—More Matters<sup>TM</sup> brand by the Produce for Better Health Foundation and its national partners, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has worked with other federal partners to define strict criteria for determining which food products can carry the new brand. We encourage FNS to recommend that state and local administering agencies urge WIC participants to look for foods that carry the Fruits & Veggies—More Matters<sup>TM</sup> brand in helping them select a variety of healthy fruits and vegetables.

I commend FNS for developing this proposed rule to more accurately reflect current dietary recommendations, especially in increasing fruit and vegetable consumption for WIC moms and kids. I urge FNS to issue the final rule by spring of 2007.

Sincerely,

Spartanburg Hutrition Council

September 12, 2006

Patricia Daniels

Director, Supplemental Food Programs Division Food and Nutrition Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, VA 22302

RE: Docket ID Number 0584-AD77, WIC Food Packages Proposed Rule

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As you proceed through the rulemaking process, please consider the following suggestions:

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PI-7

#### PI-8

From: WebMaster@fns.usda.gov

Sent: Friday, October 06, 2006 12:55 PM

To: WICHQ-SFPD

Subject: RevisionstoWICFoodPackages-Proposed Rule

NAME:

Deborah J Cudmore-Vaughn

EMAIL:

dcudmore@ppshastadiablo.org

CITY:

fairfield

STATE:

CA

ORGANIZATION: Planned Parenthood Pregnant and Parenting Teen Case

Management Program

CATEGORY:

PublicInterest-AdvocacyGroup

OtherCategory:

Date:

October 06, 2006

Time:

12:55:12 PM

#### **COMMENTS:**

This change is long overdue the children's nutritional lives depend on this change.



Ventura County's Food Banks, Director
Patricia N. Daniels, Director
Supplemental Food Programs, FNS/USDA
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528
Alexandria, VA 22302

October 12, 2006

65

RE: Docket ID Number 0584-AD77, WIC Food Packages Rule Dear Ms. Daniels:

We are writing to support USDA's proposed WIC Food Packages Rule, which will:

- improve the health and nutritional quality of the foods in the program;
- expand cultural food options; and
- increase participants' choices.

We commend USDA for updating the WIC food packages to reflect the Dietary Guidelines and current nutritional science by adding fruits and vegetables, whole grain bread, corn tortillas, whole grain rice and other whole grains, the option of soymilk and tofu, and moving to only low-fat milk and whole grain cereals.

Since the food packages were last revised, there has been an explosion of knowledge related to nutrition and health, as well as a growing obesity problem in this country. The addition of fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and other improvements in the new WIC food packages, will strengthen WIC's positive role to help mothers and children maintain a healthy weight and allow them to make healthy food choices. This will help nutritionally vulnerable children form healthy eating habits from an early age.

Moreover, we applaud USDA's proposed improvements for infants, breastfeeding women, and medically fragile participants. The introduction of fruits and vegetables as baby food for older infants will provide healthy foods the family might not otherwise be able to afford. The new enhanced food package for breastfeeding women should help WIC to promote breastfeeding. The new rule also will provide welcome relief for families struggling to pay for essential nutrition products for women and children with special nutritional needs.

To ensure that WIC participants can get the full value from the new WIC food packages, we offer the following recommendations to strengthen the proposed rule:

- Expand and Enhance the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit
- Eliminate Inappropriate Standards and Size Requirements for Whole Grain Bread and Cereals
- Remove Prescription Requirement for Soy Milk and Tofu
- Keep Proposed Food Package Protections
- Maximize Access to Farmers' Markets in your will.

4156 Southbank Drive • Oxnard, California • 93036 www.foodshare.com

Phone: (805) 983-7100 • Fax: (805) 983-2326





Establish State WIC Food Package Advisory Councils

Expand and Enhance the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit:

- Increase the Fruit and Vegetable Benefits to Fully Meet the Institute of Medicine Recommendations: USDA should make the value of the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit consistent with the IOM's recommendation to provide \$10 per month of fruits and vegetables for women and \$8 for children. The proposal gives children only three quarters of the amount of fruit and vegetables the Institute of Medicine (IOM) determined was necessary for a nutritionally sound children's WIC food package. Children receive \$8 in fruits and vegetables in the food package recommended by the IOM, but the USDA package provides only \$6. For women the proposed rule provides only \$8 in fruits and vegetables rather than the \$10 recommended by the IOM.
- Allow WIC Participants to Choose the Fruits and Vegetables They Want and Can Use: WIC participants should be allowed to use the WIC food vouchers to select the fruits and vegetables that provide the best nutritional value, best bargain and best choice for themselves and their children. The rule should not give State agencies the authority to set state limits on the variety of fruits and vegetables participants are allowed to purchase with WIC vouchers. The successful WIC fruit and vegetable pilots allowed WIC participants full choice.
- The Value of the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit Must Keep Pace with Inflation: The rule must require that the value of the fruit and vegetable benefit reflect a cost of living adjustment. It is unfortunate that the cost of living adjustment in the proposed rule is optional. Without an annual cost of living adjustment, the vouchers would be worth less and would buy smaller amounts of fruit and vegetables each year as inflation increases further falling behind the IOM recommendations.

Eliminate Inappropriate Standards and Size Requirements for Whole Grain Bread and Cereals:

Adopt Appropriate Standards for Whole Grain Cereals to Assure Access to Healthy and Culturally Acceptable Choices: We applaud USDA for preserving the nutritionally important sugar limit and important iron requirements for WIC cereals. However, the new proposed cereal grain standards create a significant barrier for WIC participants to consuming whole grain cereals. The proposed whole grain cereal standard is not an appropriate whole grain standard for bran, corn and rice cereals and consequently it eliminates defacto all bran, corn and rice WIC cereals. This is especially problematic for WIC because Hispanic families prefer corn-based cereals (for example corn flakes). The inclusion of whole grain corn-based cereals will be necessary to maintain acceptable cereal choices for the 2.5 million Hispanic women and children in WIC. Also, both corn and rice cereals provide a healthy option for WIC participants with allergies and bran cereals are an excellent source of much-needed fiber for participants. Therefore, to ensure a selection of healthy whole grain WIC cereals, we recommend the use of revised standards based on the whole grain standards used in USDA's Healthier U.S.

- Schools guidelines plus two additional alternative criteria of 1) at least 3 grams fiber for bran cereals and 2) a minimum of 8 grams whole grains.
- The Allowable Size for a Loaf of Bread Must be Consistent with the Bread Available in Stores: WIC participants need a whole grain bread voucher for a loaf of bread that is consistent with the size typically sold in stores. Otherwise, the purpose of the whole grain change is subverted and the value of the food package shrinks further. In many markets, a mother may not be able to buy any whole grain bread with a 1 pound bread voucher. The proposed rule lumps the size of a loaf of bread and grains together as 1 pound (16 ounces). This is fine for the grains (i.e. rice), which are sold by the pound, but bread is sold by the loaf. Whole grain loaves are heavy, usually weighing more than 1 pound. According to data from Interstate Bakeries, 56 percent of whole wheat/whole grain loaves are sold in a 24 ounce loaf and 25 percent are sold in a 20 ounce loaf.

Remove the Prescription Requirement for Soy Milk and Tofu: We commend USDA for including the option of soy milk and tofu to provide popular high-calcium foods for WIC participants from a diversity of cultures. In addition, these foods are an important alternative for participants with milk allergies and lactose intolerance, a problem disproportionately affecting African-Americans and Asian-Americans. The new packages will work well for women because they have free access to choosing soy milk/tofu. However, the proposed requirement for a medical prescription for children to get soy milk or tofu should be removed because it presents an insurmountable barrier for most low-income WIC families.

Keep Proposed Food Package Protections: We commend USDA for building in protections that safeguard the nutritional value of the new food packages for all participants by prohibiting state level cuts to the new food packages. In this proposed rule, USDA prohibits State WIC agencies from making across-the-board cuts in the food packages (a process known as "categorical tailoring"). This will guard against state pressures to dismantle the new WIC food packages. We agree with USDA that, given the carefully balanced food packages as designed by the Institute of Medicine, categorical tailoring is no longer necessary and would be detrimental. Individual WIC participants can have their WIC food package tailored for nutrition reasons or preference through the commonly used mechanism of "individual tailoring."

Maximize Access to Farmers' Markets: USDA's inclusion of farmers' markets as vendors for the new WIC food package fruit and vegetable vouchers is commendable, and, along with the continuation of the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, will be helpful for WIC families. The rule should make clear that farmers' markets qualify as eligible WIC vendors provided that they comply with the already well-established farmers' market or WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program procedures. WIC vendor requirements will need to allow farmers' markets to participate as seasonal vendors and exempt them from stocking the full package.

Establish State WIC Food Package Advisory Councils to Bring a Diversity of Voices and Support to the Implementation Process: State WIC Food Package advisory councils should be established to help support and inform the planning and early implementation of the new WIC food package. To be most effective, the advisory councils should include

WIC participants and representatives of the communities and organizations working to improve the health and well-being of the families served by WIC, such as advocates, food bankers and other emergency food providers, immigrant groups, food policy councils, state chapters of nutrition and health associations, and local WIC agencies.

In summary, we strongly endorse the need for the new WIC food packages and urge USDA to proceed expeditiously to analyze the comments, make the necessary changes, and quickly move forward with the process of bringing a new, healthier food package to the more than 8 million women, infants and children in the WIC program each month. Thank you for this opportunity to share our support for the new WIC food packages and our recommendations to make it stronger still.

Sincerely,

Jewel Pedi Jewel Pedi

Community Relations Director

FOOD Share, Inc.

4156 N Southbank Rd.

Oxnard, Ca 93036

805 983 7100 x131

jpedi@foodshare.com

www.foodshare.com



# Food for Thought

Official Newsletter of the Senior Nutrition Action Council

PO Box 6446 Thousand Oaks, CA 91359

Phone: (805) 495-2482 fax: (805) 497-8896

E-mail; snacvc@verizon.net

Fall 2006



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## A Message from the President:

This is our fourth newsletter and I believe each issue has been more informative than the previous one. Kudus to our editor, Cynthia Woodruff. The photographs are informative, and isn't it fun to see the people, places and activities that make our county's senior nutrition program so successful, so well attended and so well loved!

I want to take this time, again, to thank individuals and organizations for their donations to the Senior Nutrition Program:

Linda Renner donated \$100 to the Camarillo mealsite in memory of her uncle, John Meyer, Mr. Meyer was a much appreciated volunteer who delivered frozen meals to homebound seniors. (Please see photo page 8).

The Ventura Emblem Club #157 donated \$250 to the Ventura mealsite. Ventura will use the gift to add an additional side-tray to their new salad bar. (Please see photo page 8).

Crop Walk of Oxnard/Port Hueneme donated \$1,187, or 25%, of their fall fundraising proceeds to the program also. 82%, or \$974, will go to Oxnard,; and the remaining 18%, \$213, will be for the Port Hueneme Program.

The Senior Nutrition Action Council of Ventura County (SNAC) is a 501c3, non-profit organization that can accept tax-deductible contributions for the Ventura County Senior Nutrition Meals Program,

(continued on page 4)



















In this issue of "Food for Thought" we visit....

## FOOD Share

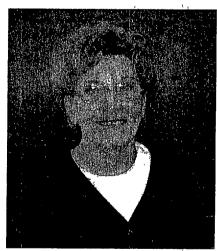
Ventura County's Food Bank

Ventura County is extremely fortunate. We have a local organization, "FOOD Share," that consistently, throughout the year, distributes over \$1,000,000 of food products free to a minimum of 100,000 hungry county residents.

Twenty-eight years ago, a missionary, Virgil Nelson, gathered together volunteers to form a group which called itself the "Gleaners", from the Scriptures. Members sought out local sources for excess produce, baked goods, and even fishermen's catches. Using their garages as warehouses, they distributed these excess foodstuffs to needy families!

#### This operation has grown!

Today, FOOD Share is housed in 2 large buildings in Oxnard, with over 55,000 cubic feet of refrigeration. They distribute over 10 million pounds of food annually, throughout a network of 240 partner agencies.



Jewel Pedi, FOOD Share Community
Relations Director

Jewel Pedi, past Executive Director, and now community Relations Director, has been with FOOD Share for twentyeight years. Jewel remembers not only the garage days, but the first move "up" to a larger facility, a 5,000 square foot Saticoy fire station. Jewel has put into place many pro-

grams, and now works with 22 employees and 500 volunteers. She continually searches out innovative ways to get good foods to people in need. Jewel so loves her work, she has had a large picture window cut through her office wall that looks right out into the cavernous warehouse!

Every three years Jewel conducts a hunger study in the county. The results of the most recent survey found a 12% increase in homelessness, with a 20% increase in homeless mothers with children. These statistics are valuable for determining future amounts of food needed. It gives support information to use when requesting donations, grants or corporate partnering and participation in the many FOOD Share programs. A few of FOOD Share's corporate supportive partners such as Sysco, Con Agra, Amgen and Procter & Gamble have improved the ability of the food bank, to fill the gap between government funding and the final cost of the food bank work

Following are the six most important programs for foogathering and distribution:

#### 1. "Share the Harvest—Produce Outreach"

This is a program that pairs excess field and orchard produce with needy county residents. John Garcia, Agency Relations Coordinator, and Andy Murphy, Produce Allocation Coordinator, work together to make this tremendous task a reality. Andy, with the help of a corps of volunteers, stays on the lookout for fields that have been



John Garcia



Andy Murphy

Agency Relations Coordinator and Produce Allocation Coordinator, respectively

recently picked; and local farmers contact him with information on excess produce availability. In the short six months that this program has been operating, John has seen that 150,000 pounds of produce have been saved from destruction, and distributed to agencies with needs to feed the hungry. Recipient agencies for the produce are Senior Nutrition meal sites, city community centers, food distribution sites, the Oxnard "City Impact"



Volunteer gleaner, Conrad Kootz, gathering corn that still remains in the field after the crop has been commercially picked. Front page gleaner is Ben Duarte in the same cornfield. Photos ourtesy of Andy Murphy.

program, and "Neighborhoods for Learning" Centers.

County residents with excess garden produce – we all frequently have too many tomatoes or cucumbers – can bring it to FOOD Share, and it also will be distributed. If you know of an excess produce source, you can reach John or Andy at:

#### (805) 983-7100 ext. 134. (John) or ext. 141 (Andy)

#### 2. "Senior Nutrition Project"

This is a widely used and appreciated food distribution program. All seniors receiving a hot, tasty noonday meal at their home or local meal sites are aware of the great service FOOD Share contributes. Homebound seniors in Ventura and Oxnard receive delivery of their food weekly, our partner program with the Cities of Ventura and Oxnard, funded with a grant by the Ventura County Area Agency on Aging.

#### 3. "Pantry and Congregate Meal Site Agencies"

Two hundred forty agencies throughout the county do e actual food distribution to those in need. Food is available at the forty-four pantry sites in the county. Do-

nated foods originate at local markets, restaurants or America's Second Harvest National Network A daily menu is given to the agencies as they arrive to "shop". Coordinators love to take advantage of these special opportunity foods, giving their diners and clients an enjoyable menu variation.

#### 4. "Kids Café"

This wonderful program was begun in 1993 by "America's Second Harvest", a national food bank network. 42% of the food recipients at FOOD Share



are children! At twelve county sites, kids not only get nutritious meals and snacks but also education on healthful eating habits. One young girl wrote to FOOD Share "...Hunger has several faces, not just....the ones on skid row, but the faces on kids like me....kids that have dreams."

#### 5. "Ready Prepared Meals"

This is an enjoyable, new program at FOOD Share. Local restaurants contact FOOD Share to let them know of excess prepared foods they have on hand. Trained food handlers pick up these prepared foods and bring them to a large freezer at the warehouse Once each week an agency may come "shopping". This is fun because the agencies never know just what special kind of food will be available. It could be barbecued ribs from the "Outback" or specialty meats donated by buyers at the County Fair livestock auction. This program gives meal-site diners variety, and enjoyable lunchtime surprises.







#### 6. "Brown Bag" Program

What a wonderful program this is! Many food products come to FOOD Share in **bulk**, such as 100 pound bags of beans or rice, cases of canned fruits and vegetables, and wheels of cheese! These foods are delivered to 2,000 seniors each week, with volunteers separating, bagging and giving them out from the participating distribution sites.

(Continued on page 4)

Here also, recipients never know just what special treat will be waiting for them!

As you can see, FOOD Share is a multi-faceted, complicated, all-encompassing program. Ventura County is so very LUCKY to have such a special organization.

THANK YOU FOOD Share for all you do. FOOD SHARE

#### Volunteer Opportunities at FOOD Share

Office Assistants: If you like people you can work as a receptionist, or answer telephone inquiries: There is a wonderful feeling of contribution when you are able to refer an anxious caller to a food pantry or mealsite in the county.

Produce Field Gleaners: This is for those of you who just can't stay out of the dirt. After crops have been picked, usable amounts remain in the fields. Working only two hours, you can salvage these fruits or vegetables, and feed a needy family!

<u>Food Sorters</u>: These volunteers do just that! As the many different types of food products are delivered to the warehouses; they must be sorted, picked over and re-packaged for distribution.

#### Truck Drivers, Helpers and Forklift Operators:

FOOD Share has sixteen trucks traveling all over the county daily, and the warehouses make constant use of forklifts! A Cal OSHA Certified trainer is on site and is available to train and certify anyone age eighteen or over, in a volunteer capacity.

Order Eillers: These are volunteers helping daily to fill agency orders and nutrition orders for delivery to homebound seniors in Ventura and Oxnard. This is a social job, and although sorters move quickly, there is plenty of opportunity for lively conversation

If any of these job descriptions have intrigued you, for further information please contact

Meg Horton, Volunteer Coordinator; (805) 983-7100 ext. 105

#### (Continued from page 1) A Message from the President

either to specific cities, or for the program. overall. Our board consists of all volunteers and our only income is from our Thrift Store in Camarillo, (see back page), or donations from the community. If you or your organization is looking for a worthy cause in which to blace a donation, please keep us in mind. I would be delighted to talk with you about donation methods and opportunities. The annual United Way campaign will begin in the fall. When you donate dollars to United Way, you may request that a particular organization, receive your gift. Simply write in "Senior Nutrition Action Council" at the bottom of your donation form. Thank you, again, to those of you who have given so generously to this wonderful program

> Thank You, Darlene Benz (805) 495-2482



Meg Horton, Volunteer Coordinator at FOOD SHARE







### This month we visit the Piru Senior Nutrition Program at

## San Salvador Parochial Mission

At twelve o'clock, the lovely sound of Big Ben church bells chimes out over the little town of Piru. It's time for lunch! For such a small town, a wonderfully large



number of seniors participate in the program. Nearly 40 hot meals are prepared each weekday: 20 are served at the congregate meal site, and 18 more are

delivered to homebound elderly. An additional 72 frozen meals are picked up at the end of the day by working seniors, and taken home for themselves and for family members unable to attend the mealsite program.

The Senior Meals Program is housed in a lovely facility at the San Salvador Mission. The Program Manager is Father Barnard Gatlin, an Associate Pastor of the Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Fillmore, who is



Father Barney tending his garden

affectionately known by everyone as "Father Barney". Father Barney maintains the 2 acre grounds of the mission by himself, with the help of a few volunteers. Many trees and shrubs, including citrus, jacaranda, bougainvillea and roses have been donated to the mission, and the grounds are verdant,

and bursting with beautiful color. There is a level path bordered with trees that serves as a meditative walkway. It is adjacent to the dining room and is a perfect place for seniors to stroll after lunch. Fruits, produce and herbs, from the grounds, are distributed to seniors, and are also used in special breakfasts prepared on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Joy Zavala is the Site Coordinator. Joy says she "loves taking good care of seniors". She not only

manages weekday senior meals program, but volunteers both Saturday and Sunday mornings every fifth week to plan, cook and serve breakfast to seniors and other parishion-Joy preers. pares a special dessert at least one time each week to keep



Joy Zavala, Site Coordinator, in her pride and joy—a sparkling new and spacious pantry!

diners curious, and she organizes a birthday luncheon each month, for which she creates one of her special desserts such as crème puffs, mini cheese cakes or chocolate dipped strawberries!

The mission kitchen is spacious and sparkling. Dining tables are set with placemats brightly decorated by local school children, and soft music plays from a portable player. Fresh flowers adorn each table – flowers grown right outside in the garden, picked especially for the lunch tables.



Thresia Molden, Kitchen Staff, (left) and volunteer Alice Alverdi

Brown Bag Day is every third Wednesday. FOOD SHARE provides a wide variety of commodities in bulk such as beans, rice, cheese, and whatever fresh produce is in season and plentiful. Also on Brown

### San Salvador Parochial Mission continued

Bag Day, health screenings take place, performed by Sister Gloria from Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Fillmore, that include blood sugar and blood pressure checks. Needless to say, this is a very popular day. The dining room is full, and bustling with activity as over eighty seniors participate in the program.











A shining star of the Piru Senior Meals Program



is volunteer, Elma Ponce. Elma, among her many important other contributions. responsible for delivering eight meals. everv weekday, to very elderly Piru seniors.







Elma is particularly fond of two special homebound seniors: Peggy Lechler, and Joe Nunez, both of whom turned age 96 this past August!

The Area Agency on Aging Senior Nutrition Program strives to make it possible for these lovely and gracious seniors to be able to live in their own homes, receive nutritious meals, and be visited daily by a caring, involved member of their own community.

Happy Birthday Peggy and Joe!

To become a part of this lovely program and enjoy dining in the Mission's beautiful setting, please con tact the main church at 524-1306. Word will get back to Joy and Father Barney!

The Senior Nutrition Action Council Wishes to Thank

#### Santa Barbara Bank

Ms. Briana Li Fischer, Vice President of Santa Barbara Bank and Trust, has very generously offered SNAC charge-free banking. There is always a good amount of monthly financial activity in the two SNAC accounts, with Thrift Store proceeds deposited dally.

Santa Barbara Bank has 14 locations in Ventura County. They are well-known for their charitable community participation, and altruistic spirit,

We are so bleased that all the Board's fundraising efforts, and all the generous donations from individuals and organizations, can go directly to support the Senior Meals Program itself, and not administrative expenses.

Thank You to each of you who continue to patronize the member businesses of

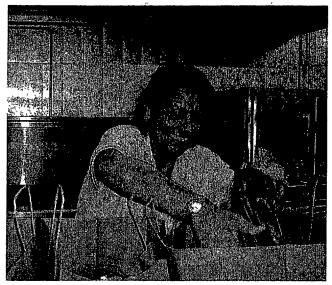
## "Points for Profit".

and thanks for bringing in your receipts. As a reminder, a booklet of participating businesses is available at your meal center. New booklets will be available early this fall.

This is an EASY way to donate \$\$ to the Senior Nutrition Action Council, which, in turn, supports all the Area Agency on Aging Senior Meal Programs.

## Por Hueneme Community Center

It's 9:00 a.m. and Senior Nutrition Coordinator, Luz Rodriguez has already sent out half of the 23 homedelivered meals that will be delivered today. Luz began her career twenty-two years ago, with the City of Oxnard. She says that "they were reluctant to hire someone so young; they were not sure I would be able to work with seniors". Like so many of the other mealsite coordinators, Luz has become personal friends with the seniors in her program. If she doesn't hear from them every day, she calls or drops by their homes to be sure everything is OK.



Luz Rodriguez, Senior Nutrition Coordinator, preparing bags containing a week's supply of food for Port Hueneme home-bound seniors.

The Port Hueneme program depends on volunteers for its continuing success. Linda and Gary Cain, David Mooney and Shaun Prater sustain the home delivered meals program. They all wear attractive, light-blue polo shirts with a seagull logo, and are as



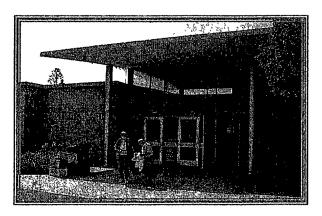


Dedicated Volunteers, Gary and Linda Cain, and David Mooney Not pictured is faithful volunteer, Shaun Prater.

dedicated and reliable a team of workers as one could imagine. Linda has missed only *one* day in her twenty-five years of volunteering. Like Luz, Linda and her husband Gary, whom she calls her "driver", watch for potential problems at the homes of their seniors. Linda says, "I have parents who are seniors, and I hope that when I'm a senior, someone is there to help me."

Lisa Donley is the Director of Recreation and Community Services at the Port Hueneme Community Center, She says there is a "heavy focus on seniors" in the community. The City works with three advisory councils, receiving reports from them twice a year, thereby maintaining a good line of communication with the senior population. Lisa says, "We are small, but mighty".

Each week the center offers exercise classes, Bridge, needlework and quilting, a walking group known as the "Silver Streaks", and a Vocal Production Group which creates free choral concerts twice each year. Special services to seniors include Grey Law, HICAP, a Nail and Foot Clinic and special programs



sponsored by AARP. Every month there is a Senior Ballroom Dance, with live entertainment and refreshments!

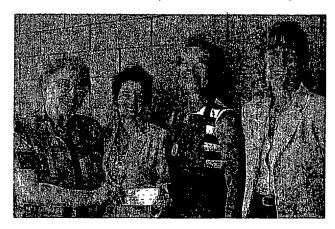
If you would like to participate in any of Port Hueneme's many senior activities, please call

Lisa at (805) 986-6542

Or, to join local seniors for lunch, please call

Luz at (805) 986-6676

#### Senior Nutrition Action Council President, Darlene Benz, forwards donations to staff at two meals



The Camarillo Health Care District's "Apple a Day Cafe" received \$100 from Linda Renner, in memory of her uncle, John Meyer. Accepting the check is (second from left) Kara Partridge, Chief Information Officer; (second from right) Dolly Horne, Food Services Mngr; and (far right) Dawn McCarty, Senior Lunch Program Coordinator.



The City of San Buenaventura's Senior Nutrition Program received \$250 from the Ventura Emblem Club #157. Accepting the check is (left) Nanci Cone, Community Services Coordinator; (second from left) Bonnie Wiley, Supervisor of Community Services; and (far right) Glenda Bivens, Site Coordinator.

#### A COOL Idea for Summer Dining from Senior Nutrition Registered Dictician, Patti Jeager

As the warm days of summer continue, a refreshing, seasonal fruit salad always seems to cool the mind as well as the palette. A beautiful and colorful fruit salad, this is equally suitable to serve as a refreshing appetizer, or to round off a meal.. This serves 4

- 1 cantaloupe
- 1 honeydew melon
- 1/2 watermelon
- 2 cups strawberries
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon honey (optional)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
- 1 fresh mint sprig (optional)

Prepare the melons by cutting them in half and discarding the seeds. Use a melon baller to scoop out the flesh into balls or, alternatively, a knife to cut it into cubes. Rinse and hull the strawberries, cut in half and add to melon balls or cubes. Combine the lemon juice and honey and add 1 tablespoon water to make it easier to spoon onto the fruit. Mix into the fruit gently. Sprinkle the chopped mint on top of the fruit. Serve the fruit salad decorated with the mint sprig, if desired.











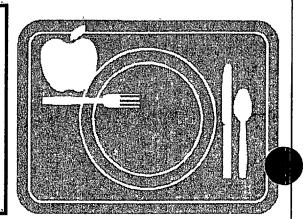


Ventura County Area Agency on Aging

Sérving Senior's Since 1980

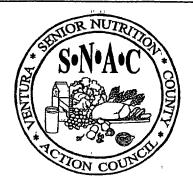
Information and Assistance (800) 510-2020

Héálth Insurance Counséling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) (800) 434-0222



## **Ventura County Senior Nutrition Programs**

City .	Congregate Meal Service	Home Delivered Meals	<u>Telephone</u>
Camarillo	Camarillo Health Care District Apple-A-Day Café at the Camarillo Senior Center 1605 Burnley (a new location)	Delivered frozen daily Weekend meals available Delivered hot daily as needed	(805) 388-1952
Fillmore	City of Fillmore Fillmore Senior Center 533 Santa Clara Street	Delivered hot daily	(805) 524-4533
Moorpark	City of Moorpark Moorpark Active Adult Center 799 Moorpark Avenue	Delivered frozen weekly Weekend meals available Delivered hot daily as needed	(805) 517-6261
Ojai	<b>HELP of Ojai</b> Oak Tree House Adult Day Care 111 W. Santa Ana Street	Delivered hot daily Weekend meals available Delivered hot daily as needed	(805) 646-5122
Oxnard	City of Oxnard Wilson Senior Center 350 N. C Street	Delivered frozen weekly Delivered hot daily as needed	(805) 385-8029
	Colonia Senior Center 126 Amelia Court		
	South Oxnard Senior Center 200 E. Bard Road		
Piru	San Salvador Parochial Mission 4053 Center Street	Delivered frozen weekly Delivered hot daily as needed	e-mail—barneygatlin @yahoo.com
Port Hueneme	City of Port Hueneme Port Hueneme Community Center 550 Park Avenue	Delivered frozen weekly	(805) 986-6676
Santa Paula	Santa Paula Senior Center Spreckels Community Center 530 W. Main Street	Call for information	(805) 933-4263
Simi Valley	City of Simi Valley Simi Valley Senior Center 3900 Avenida Simi	Delivered hot daily	(805) 583-6363
Thousand Oaks	City of Thousand Oaks Goebel Senior Adult Center 1385 E. Janss Road	Home delivered meals are available at Senior Concerns (805) 497-0159	(805) 381-2746
Ventura	City of Ventura Ventura Avenue Adult Center 550 N. Ventura Avenue	Delivered frozen weekly Delivered hot daily as needed	(805) 648-3148



#### **SNAC**

Senior Nutrition Action Council of Ventura County PO Box 6446 Thousand Oaks, CA 91359

#### **SNAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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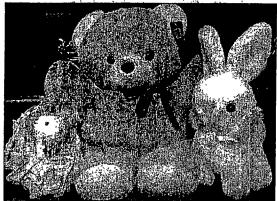
AAA Advisor to the Board — Susan White

# These are the kind of desirable items that can be found at the SNAC Thrift Shop

located in Camarillo, at 2211 Ventura Blyd, open Mon.—Sat, 10 am to 4 pm.

The funds raised at the Thrift Store help to support the hot meals program for seniors, both at congregate

meal sites and in private homes.



The Thrift Shop is full of darling, clean, stuffed animals just like these—priced from \$1.00—\$3.00.

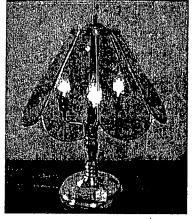


Table lamps like this one in delicate etched glass begin at only \$7.50!



Just like new, pretty fabric flower arrangements like this one start at \$5.00



OCT 1 4 2006

1401 Higuera Street + Mail: P.O. Box IS80 + San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Phone: 805.543.2323 + www.sloccf.org + Fax: 805.543.2346

October 13, 2006

Patricia N. Daniels, Director Supplemental Food Programs Division Food and Nutrition Service, USDA 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Ms. Daniels:

I'm writing to thank USDA for its efforts in bringing the WIC food packages in closer alignment with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and with the feeding recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics for children less than 5 years of age. The WIC Food Package Proposed Rule offers the most significant and substantive changes to the food packages since the Program's inception in 1974.

The proposed changes provide a greater variety of high nutrient food choices to the WIC participants, lowers saturated fat and cholesterol in the food packages, allow WIC to better meet the food preferences of its culturally diverse population, better support and promote breastfeeding, reinforce WIC's nutrition education messages, and are cost-neutral.

Currently, WIC serves 8.2 million women, infants and children. Approximately, half of all infants and 25% of all children under 5 in the U.S participate in WIC. The revised food packages will help our nation's families establish healthy eating habits, which are key to preventing obesity, diabetes, heart and other nutritionally related diseases.

Although I support the WIC Food Package Proposed Rule, I strongly encourage USDA to re-evaluate the WIC food package on a more frequent interval (every 3-5 years) in the future using the most current evidence-based nutritional recommendations. This will allow WIC to continue to provide the most healthy foods to women and children during the most nutritionally vulnerable period of their lives.

I would urge USDA to support and finalize the rule as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Janice Fong Wolf

Director of Grants & Programs

bz.//

## 1397 Royalsborough Road Durham, ME 04222 Oct 6, 2006

Patricia Daniels, Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division
Food and Nutrition Service
United States Department of agriculture
3101 Park Center Drive Room 528
Alexandria, Virginia 22303

PI-12

Dear Ms. Daniels:

# REF Docket ID Number 0584-AD77-WIC Food Package Rule

I am a social worker writing to offer the support of **Partners in Ending Hunger** for the revisions in the WIC food packages as proposed by USDA. Many Americans, especially lower income families and children, will benefit from this proposal that will allocate a greater share of public nutrition assistance resources for the healthiest foods available. The introduction of fruits and vegetables, particularly fresh ones, for the WIC food packages will help shift the calorie dense, nutritional poor diet that is necessarily too often the diet of the poor. It's also a big step in breaking the cycle of childhood obesity that rages through our nation, affecting youth in all income brackets. It will encourage healthy eating for the program's mothers and children now, and will also encourage a lifetime of healthier eating for the future.

Over the last 30 years, farmers' markets have played an increasingly important role in bringing fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables to the nation's communities. In Maine this is certainly evident. Because farmers' markets have been particularly successful in making fresh produce available in lower income urban and rural areas, and especially to WIC participants, we focus our comments on the proposed revisions

that address the inclusion of farmers' markets as eligible vendors.

According to USDA, there are now 3,740 U.S. farmers' markets (a number that is continuously growing) serving millions of consumers and providing tens of thousands of farmers with strong market outlets for locally produced food. They operate in every state, nearly every major city, and can be found in almost every county. Farmers' markets have been enormously successful in bringing a wide selection of affordable, extremely fresh, and locally grown produce to places that have been traditionally under served by other forms of affordable, retail food outlets. They also serve as a community meeting spot, where commonalities are appreciated and socio-economic differences minimized —when access is possible by all.

Farmers Markets have tailored their crop selection and marketing to the traditional food preferences of a wide variety of racial and ethnic minority groups, and in many cases, newly arrived refugee and immigrants groups. In Maine, we have had a huge influx of new refugee and immigrant groups who have been aided by programs that provide training and start up needs to new and immigrant farmers who are from the same communities as WIC shoppers. The result is that new farmers are growing and marketing food at farmers' markets that is preferred by these same minority, refugee, and immigrants groups.

All in all, farmers' markets have improved the access of some of America's most nutritionally vulnerable people to fresh, affordable produce. And without good access to healthy food, nutrition education and increased buying power will have little effect.

A complementary aspect of farmers' market growth in low-income communities has been the development and gradual expansion of USDA's WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), started in1989 and further extended by the development of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program in 2001. The WIC FMNP now operates in 46 states, U.S. territories, and tribal nations and served approximately 2.7

million WIC recipients in 2005, a number which represents a third of all WIC recipients. Surveys conducted over the years by state and tribal agencies, which administer the WIC FMNP consistently find that the modest benefits provided to WIC recipients (usually about \$20 per recipient annually) result in greater consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among recipients. When WIC offices and other participating organizations, including the farmers and farmers' markets themselves, provide nutrition education information and activities to WIC recipients, the value of the FMNP vouchers is enhanced and the long-term consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is more likely to occur. Just as farmers' markets have brought fresh produce to economically distressed communities, the FMNP has brought more socially and economically disadvantaged families to farmers' markets.

The WIC FMNP has two major benefits that will enhance the effectiveness of providing special produce vouchers that can be redeemed at farmers' markets. First, the FMNP coupons in themselves provide a strong boost to the viability of low-income farmers' markets; many such markets might not operate without such a program. Secondly, by operating WIC FMNPs, states and tribal organizations have developed the organizational and administrative capacity they will need to operate the proposed WIC produce voucher program. The current procedures for WIC FMNP benefit distribution, redemption, and accountability are very consistent with the proposed revisions pertaining to fruit and vegetable vouchers. FMNP agencies (generally state health and agriculture departments) now issue vouchers that range in value from \$2 to \$5. They have voucher tracking and other accountability procedures as well as procedures to authorize participating farmers and farmers' markets. Additionally, both the development of farmers' markets and the implementation of the WIC FMNP require working partnerships and collaborations between multiple agencies and organizations, both public as well as private. These experiences and practices, developed over the course of 17 years of operating the WIC FMNP, should allow state and tribal WIC agencies to make a relatively smooth transition to the implementation of the proposed fruit and vegetable voucher system.

In order for WIC recipients to secure as much nutritional value as possible from the use of the proposed fruit and vegetable WIC vouchers at farmers' markets, **Partners in Ending Hunger** stands in solidarity with the following comments and recommendations of the Community Food Security Coalition, for inclusion in the WIC Food Package regulations:

- USDA shall do no harm to the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program either through reducing current funding levels or establishing rules, systems, or procedures at the federal or state levels that would adversely affect the operation and effectiveness of the WIC FMNP.
- Coordination shall be required between the proposed WIC fruit and vegetable voucher program and all existing and future federal-state WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Programs.
- Farmers and farmers' markets that are currently authorized under state WIC FMNP procedures shall be automatically eligible for vendor specification under the new fruit and vegetable voucher program. These WIC FMNP farmer and farmers' market authorization procedures shall also be applied by states in the future vendor specification process.
- States shall be required to allow farmers' markets as eligible vendors for fresh fruits and vegetables, with the provision that they comply with farmers' and farmers' market authorization procedures.
- Farmers and farmers' markets that are currently authorized under state WIC FMNP procedures shall be automatically eligible as WIC vendors for the new fruit and vegetable vouchers issued by the WIC program. The WIC FMNP farmer and farmers' market authorization procedures shall also be applied by states as the vendor requirements for farmers or farmers' markets for this program.
- With respect to vendor requirements, farmers' markets shall be allowed to participate as seasonal vendors since most farmers' markets in the country are unable to operate year round. Similarly, farmers' markets shall be exempt from the "WIC-only" cost containment requirement and shall not be required to carry a full-range of WIC food package products.
- When practicable, states should seek to develop systems for the distribution and use of fruit and vegetable vouchers that are compatible with existing WIC FMNP procedures. Nutrition education efforts and state and local promotion of fresh fruit and vegetable vouchers should be compatible with and seek to take advantage of existing WIC FMNP education and promotion practices. States should be encouraged to reduce the administrative costs associated with a fruit and vegetable voucher system by developing systems that are compatible with

their respective WIC FMNPs

In the event that states adopt EBT technology for the use of nutrition benefits by WIC recipients, farmers' markets must also be provided with the most practical EBT systems for the fruit and vegetable redemption process.

With respect to all vendors that may be specified under this program and other key operational issues for the new fruit and vegetable voucher program, **Partners in Ending Hunger** recommends the following rules:

- State agencies shall not have the authority to limit the range of fruit and vegetable items that may be purchased with fruit and vegetable vouchers, though preference shall be given to fresh fruits and vegetables first, then to frozen, and lastly canned.
- There shall be a cost of living adjustment reflected in the value of the vouchers in order to keep pace with inflation.
- The denomination of fruit and vegetable instruments shall be in small amounts such as \$1.00 and \$2.00 denominations.
- No change shall be given for vouchers that don't purchase their full denominational value.
- Consistent with Institute of Medicine's recommendation, we support the amount of \$10 per month of fruits and vegetables for mothers and \$8 for children.
- State advisory groups shall be established to develop the most effective and responsive system possible for operating the fruit and vegetable voucher program. Where states and/or municipalities have food policy councils, their participation in the advisory process is strongly encouraged.

Just as farmers' markets have been pioneers in making the best fruits and vegetables available to people and places that need them the most, **Partners** recommends that WIC encourage the availability of high quality fresh fruits and vegetables in all outlets that serve WIC recipients. In this regard the national WIC Program should consider implementing pilot projects that test various methods of increasing access to fresh produce in a variety of retail food outlets, including farmers' markets, in areas that are poorly served by such outlets.

**Partners in Ending Hunger** thanks you for the forward-looking proposal to make fruits and vegetables a regular part of the WIC food

package. This advance in the food package will not only prove immeasurably valuable for lower income women and children, but also assist the nation's family farmers, especially our Maine farmers, for whom farmers' markets are essential to preserving their livelihoods. Farmers' markets can make a substantial contribution to the success of this new initiative, one that promises to provide a healthy tomorrow for all Americans. It's a big step in our work to end hunger in Maine, in all of America.

Sincerely,

Susan Simone Stickney

OCT 1 2 2006

Patricia N. Daniels, Director Supplemental Food Programs, FNS/USDA 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, VA 22302

RE: Docket ID Number 0584-AD77, WIC Food Packages Rule

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#### Dear Ms. Daniels:

We are writing to support USDA's proposed WIC Food Packages Rule, which will:

- improve the health and nutritional quality of the foods in the program;
- expand cultural food options; and
- increase participants' choices.

We commend USDA for updating the WIC food packages to reflect the Dietary Guidelines and current nutritional science by adding fruits and vegetables, whole grain bread, corn tortillas, whole grain rice and other whole grains, the option of soymilk and tofu, and moving to only low-fat milk and whole grain cereals.

Since the food packages were last revised, there has been an explosion of knowledge related to nutrition and health, as well as a growing obesity problem in this country. The addition of fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and other improvements in the new WIC food packages, will strengthen WIC's positive role to help mothers and children maintain a healthy weight and allow them to make healthy food choices. This will help nutritionally vulnerable children form healthy eating habits from an early age.

Moreover, we applaud USDA's proposed improvements for infants, breastfeeding women, and medically fragile participants. The introduction of fruits and vegetables as baby food for older infants will provide healthy foods the family might not otherwise be able to afford. The new enhanced food package for breastfeeding women should help WIC to promote breastfeeding. The new rule also will provide welcome relief for families struggling to pay for essential nutrition products for women and children with special nutritional needs.

To ensure that WIC participants can get the full value from the new WIC food packages, we offer the following recommendations to strengthen the proposed rule:

- Expand and Enhance the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit
- Eliminate Inappropriate Standards and Size Requirements for Whole Grain Bread and Cereals
- Remove Prescription Requirement for Soy Milk and Tofu
- Keep Proposed Food Package Protections
- Maximize Access to Farmers' Markets
- Establish State WIC Food Package Advisory Councils

Expand and Enhance the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit:

- Increase the Fruit and Vegetable Benefits to Fully Meet the Institute of Medicine Recommendations: USDA should make the value of the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit consistent with the IOM's recommendation to provide \$10 per month of fruits and vegetables for women and \$8 for children. The proposal gives children only three quarters of the amount of fruit and vegetables the Institute of Medicine (IOM) determined was necessary for a nutritionally sound children's WIC food package. Children receive \$8 in fruits and vegetables in the food package recommended by the IOM, but the USDA package provides only \$6. For women the proposed rule provides only \$8 in fruits and vegetables rather than the \$10 recommended by the IOM.
- Allow WIC Participants to Choose the Fruits and Vegetables They Want and Can Use: WIC participants should be allowed to use the WIC food vouchers to select the fruits and vegetables that provide the best nutritional value, best bargain and best choice for themselves and their children. The rule should not give State agencies the authority to set state limits on the variety of fruits and vegetables participants are allowed to purchase with WIC vouchers. The successful WIC fruit and vegetable pilots allowed WIC participants full choice.
- The Value of the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit Must Keep Pace with Inflation: The rule must require that the value of the fruit and vegetable benefit reflect a cost of living adjustment. It is unfortunate that the cost of living adjustment in the proposed rule is optional. Without an annual cost of living adjustment, the vouchers would be worth less and would buy smaller amounts of fruit and vegetables each year as inflation increases further falling behind the IOM recommendations.

Eliminate Inappropriate Standards and Size Requirements for Whole Grain Bread and Cereals:

Adopt Appropriate Standards for Whole Grain Cereals to Assure Access to Healthy and Culturally Acceptable Choices: We applaud USDA for preserving the nutritionally important sugar limit and important iron requirements for WIC cereals. However, the new proposed cereal grain standards create a significant barrier for WIC participants to consuming whole grain cereals. The proposed whole grain cereal standard is <u>not an</u> appropriate whole grain standard for bran, corn and rice cereals and consequently it eliminates defacto all bran, corn and rice WIC cereals. This is especially problematic for WIC because Hispanic families prefer corn-based cereals (for example corn flakes). The inclusion of whole grain corn-based cereals will be necessary to maintain acceptable cereal choices for the 2.5 million Hispanic women and children in WIC. Also, both corn and rice cereals provide a healthy option for WIC participants with allergies and bran cereals are an excellent source of much-needed fiber for participants. Therefore, to ensure a selection of healthy whole grain WIC cereals, we recommend the use of revised standards based on the whole grain standards used in USDA's Healthier U.S. Schools guidelines plus two additional alternative criteria of 1) at least 3 grams fiber for bran cereals and 2) a minimum of 8 grams whole grains.

• The Allowable Size for a Loaf of Bread Must be Consistent with the Bread Available in Stores: WIC participants need a whole grain bread voucher for a loaf of bread that is consistent with the size typically sold in stores. Otherwise, the purpose of the whole grain change is subverted and the value of the food package shrinks further. In many markets, a mother may not be able to buy any whole grain bread with a 1 pound bread voucher. The proposed rule lumps the size of a loaf of bread and grains together as 1 pound (16 ounces). This is fine for the grains (i.e. rice), which are sold by the pound, but bread is sold by the loaf. Whole grain loaves are heavy, usually weighing more than 1 pound. According to data from Interstate Bakeries, 56 percent of whole wheat/whole grain loaves are sold in a 24 ounce loaf and 25 percent are sold in a 20 ounce loaf.

Remove the Prescription Requirement for Soy Milk and Tofu: We commend USDA for including the option of soy milk and tofu to provide popular high-calcium foods for WIC participants from a diversity of cultures. In addition, these foods are an important alternative for participants with milk allergies and lactose intolerance, a problem disproportionately affecting African-Americans and Asian-Americans. The new packages will work well for women because they have free access to choosing soy milk/tofu. However, the proposed requirement for a medical prescription for children to get soy milk or tofu should be removed because it presents an insurmountable barrier for most low-income WIC families.

Keep Proposed Food Package Protections: We commend USDA for building in protections that safeguard the nutritional value of the new food packages for all participants by prohibiting state level cuts to the new food packages. In this proposed rule, USDA prohibits State WIC agencies from making across-the-board cuts in the food packages (a process known as "categorical tailoring"). This will guard against state pressures to dismantle the new WIC food packages. We agree with USDA that, given the carefully balanced food packages as designed by the Institute of Medicine, categorical tailoring is no longer necessary and would be detrimental. Individual WIC participants can have their WIC food package tailored for nutrition reasons or preference through the commonly used mechanism of "individual tailoring."

Maximize Access to Farmers' Markets: USDA's inclusion of farmers' markets as vendors for the new WIC food package fruit and vegetable vouchers is commendable, and, along with the continuation of the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, will be helpful for WIC families. The rule should make clear that farmers' markets qualify as eligible WIC vendors provided that they comply with the already well-established farmers' market or WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program procedures. WIC vendor requirements will need to allow farmers' markets to participate as seasonal vendors and exempt them from stocking the full package.

Establish State WIC Food Package Advisory Councils to Bring a Diversity of Voices and Support to the Implementation Process: State WIC Food Package advisory councils should be established to help support and inform the planning and early implementation of the new WIC food package. To be most effective, the advisory councils should include WIC participants and representatives of the communities and organizations working to improve the health and well-being of the families served by WIC, such as advocates, food

bankers and other emergency food providers, immigrant groups, food policy councils, state chapters of nutrition and health associations, and local WIC agencies.

In summary, we strongly endorse the need for the new WIC food packages and urge USDA to proceed expeditiously to analyze the comments, make the necessary changes, and quickly move forward with the process of bringing a new, healthier food package to the more than 8 million women, infants and children in the WIC program each month. Thank you for this opportunity to share our support for the new WIC food packages and our recommendations to make it stronger still.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Bauman

Food Security Specialist, WISCAP

mary l. Barren

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New York, NY 10024
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www.wscah.org

## West Side Campaign Against Hunger

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Patricia N. Daniels, Director

Supplemental Food Programs, FNS/USDA

3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528

Alexandria, VA 22302

RE: Docket ID Number 0584-AD77, WIC Food Packages Rule

#### Dear Ms. Daniels:

We are writing to support USDA's proposed WIC Food Packages Rule, which will:

- improve the health and nutritional quality of the foods in the program;
- expand cultural food options; and
- increase participants' choices.

We commend USDA for updating the WIC food packages to reflect the Dietary Guidelines and current nutritional science by adding fruits and vegetables, whole grain bread, corn tortillas, whole grain rice and other whole grains, the option of soymilk and tofu, and moving to only low-fat milk and whole grain cereals.

Since the food packages were last revised, there has been an explosion of knowledge related to nutrition and health, as well as a growing obesity problem in this country. The addition of fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and other improvements in the new WIC food packages, will strengthen WIC's positive role to help mothers and children maintain a healthy weight and allow them to make healthy food choices. This will help nutritionally vulnerable children form healthy eating habits from an early age.

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To ensure that WIC participants can get the full value from the new WIC food packages, we offer the following recommendations to strengthen the proposed rule:

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Expand and Enhance the Fruit and Vegetable Benefit:

- Increase the Fruit and Vegetable Benefits to Fully Meet the Institute of Medicine
  Recommendations: USDA should make the value of the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit
  consistent with the IOM's recommendation to provide \$10 per month of fruits and vegetables for
  women and \$8 for children. The proposal gives children only three quarters of the amount of
  fruit and vegetables the Institute of Medicine (IOM) determined was necessary for a nutritionally
  sound children's WIC food package. Children receive \$8 in fruits and vegetables in the food
  package recommended by the IOM, but the USDA package provides only \$6. For women the
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- Allow WIC Participants to Choose the Fruits and Vegetables They Want and Can Use: WIC participants should be allowed to use the WIC food vouchers to select the fruits and vegetables that provide the best nutritional value, best bargain and best choice for themselves and their children. The rule should not give State agencies the authority to set state limits on the variety of fruits and vegetables participants are allowed to purchase with WIC vouchers. The successful WIC fruit and vegetable pilots allowed WIC participants full choice.

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Page 4

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In summary, we strongly endorse the need for the new WIC food packages and urge USDA to proceed expeditiously to analyze the comments, make the necessary changes, and quickly move forward with the process of bringing a new, healthier food package to the more than 8 million women, infants and children in the WIC program each month. Thank you for this opportunity to share our support for the new WIC food packages and our recommendations to make it stronger still.

Sincerely,

Doreen Wohl, Executive Director, West Side Campaign Against Hunger

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#### **FAMILYCOOK** PRODUCTIONS

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330 East 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Ste 704, NYC 10017 212.867.3929 FamilyCookProductions.com

October 23, 2006

Patricia N. Daniels WIC Director, FNS/USDA 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528 Alexandria, VA 22302 RE: Docket ID Number 0584-AD77

Dear Ms. Daniels:

Í am writing to support ÚSĎÁ's proposed new ŴIC food þáckages fule because it will improve the health and nutritional quality of the foods offered by allowing WIC recipients to purchase more fresh produce through their benefits.

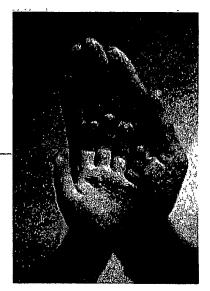
Recent studies have repeatedly documented the health benefits to individuals who consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Further, since WIC coupons can be redeemed at Farmers' Markets, the new rule would allow for enhanced nutrition since very new studies are demonstrating the loss of nutrition, particularly vitamin C, in produce that is shipped great distance and takes longer to appear on the grocer's shelves.

Hence, I do commend USDA for updating the WIC food packages to reflect the Dietary Guidelines and current nutritional science by adding fruits, vegetables, whole grain bread, corn tortillas, and the option of soymilk and tofu, and moving to low-fat milk and whole grain cereals.

I support USDA for building in protections safeguarding the nutritional value of the new food packages for all participants by strictly prohibiting state level cuts to the new food packages.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my support for the healthy WIC food packages and my recommendations to make them stronger still. I hope USDA will act quickly to issue the new food packages: It has a first and the way to a

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#### CITY OF BURLINGTON BOARD OF HEALTH

645 Piñe Stréët Post Office Box 849 Burlington, VT 05402-0849 802-865-7510 802-652-4221 FAX 802-863-0450 TTY

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**BOARD OF HEALTH** 

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HEALTH SPECIALIST

Kathleen Butler

**HEALTH OFFICER** 

**Gregory McKnight II** 

October 26, 2006

Patricia N. Daniels
Director, Supplemental Food Programs Division
Food and Nutrition Service
USDA
3101 Park Center Drive
Room 528
Alexandria, VA 22302

Docket ID-Number: 0584-AD77-WIC Food Packages Rule Control of the Control of the

Dear Ms. Daniels:

Burlington, Vermont's City Council appoints a five member, citizen-advisory group known as the Burlington Board of Health. Each member may serve unlimited, three year terms at the discretion of the Council. A chairman of the board is elected at the discretion of its members.

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The Board of Health has limited statutory responsibility for the prevention, removal or destruction of public health hazards and the mitigation of public health risks. The Board of Health also addresses public health matters which are pertinent to the prevention of disease and the improvement of the general welfare of Burlingtonians. Primarily, the Board of Health coordinates with Burlington's Code Enforcement Office, and then, with other city and state offices and programs. It is common for the Board of Health to cooperate with both local and state organizations and to provide opportunities for public discussion and education.

Having given you these qualifications, I am writing to express the Burlington Board of Health's support for the proposed rule to change the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children food packages. The health and well-being of women, infants, and children is a priority of the board. The proposed changes will greatly benefit vulnerable mothers and children.

We are pleased that the proposed rule closely reflects the science-based recommendations of the Institute of Medicine published in their April 2005 report entitled, WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change. The changes reflected in the proposed rule are also consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and national nutrition guidance including those from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

We agree that the changes in the proposed rule are a significant step forward and will improve the overall health of WIC mothers and children by contributing to reductions in obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases.

#### In particular:

- We support adding fruits and vegetables to the food packages of women, infants and children while
  reducing the amount of fruit juice provided. Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables is associated
  with reduced risk for obesity and chronic diseases such as cancer; stroke, cardiovascular disease, and type 2
  diabetes.
- We support the quantities of dairy products and eggs offered in the proposed rule. These quantities meet the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. We agree that alternative calcium sources such as soy milk and tofu should be necessary additions to the food packages to address milk protein allergy, lactose maldigestion, personal preferences, and cultural diversity of the WIC population.
- We support the whole grain requirement for cereals and the introduction of whole grain bread and other
  whole grains such as corn tortillas and brown rice. Whole grain consumption is associated with reducing
  the risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and digestive system and hormone-related cancers. It
  also assists with maintaining a healthy weight and increasing dietary fiber intake.
- While we commend USDA's efforts in the proposed rule to support the initiation and duration of breastfeeding, we urge that there be no test period for partially breastfeeding, food packages for women and infants. We believe that deletion of the pilot phase would speed the implementation of these packages. For women who declare themselves as breastfeeding mothers, we urge that, consistent with the IOM recommendation, State programs be given the option to establish criteria under which infant formula may be provided in the first month.
- Tổ further support breastfeeding, we tirge that the cash-value vouchers for fruits and vegetables for fully breastfeeding women be increased to \$10. We believe that this change would be cost-neutral and a significant incentive for breastfeeding mothers.

The Burlington Board of Health commends USDA for the release of the proposed rule making major changes to the WIC food packages. This proposed rule makes the WIC food packages consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and is a major step forward to improve the overall nutritional health and well-being of WIC mothers and children.

The proposed food packages will provide greater amounts of all of the priority nutrients currently identified as needed by the WIC population. They will supply a reliable and culturally acceptable source of supplemental nutritious foods as well as promote and support exclusive breastfeeding. Equally important, the proposals will provide WIC professionals with the necessary tools to reinforce the nutrition education messages and promote healthier food choices.

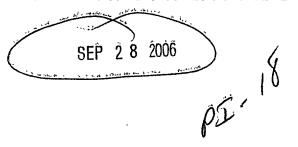
WIC is our nation's premier public health nutrition program. The long-term benefits of providing participants with fruits and vegetables, lower fat dairy products and whole grains, as well as additional incentives for fully breastfeeding women will greatly aid WIC in improving the life-long health of our most vulnerable women, infants and children.

The Burlington Board of Health urges publication of a final rule by the spring of 2007 to assure timely implementation of the rule's invaluable changes.

Alan Sousie, RN, MED



Latino Health Access 1717 N. Broadway Santa Ana, CA 92706-2605 (714) 542-7792 www.latinohealthaccess.org



Action

September 21, 2006

Ms. Patricia N. Daniels
Director, Supplemental Food Programs Division,
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 528
Alexandria, VA 22302

Re: Support for the WIC Food Package changes proposed by the USDA

Dear Ms. Daniels,

On behalf of Latino Health Access I write to express our support for the WIC Food Package changes proposed by the USDA. Our organization supports the changes suggested by the USDA for IOM WIC food packages because we feel that it would result in a positive outcome for the mothers, babies and children of California.

In particular, we support the addition of fruits and vegetables for all WIC participants six months and older. Research shows that increased consumption of fruits and vegetables helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer, stroke, cardiovascular disease and Type II diabetes. Studies show that increased consumption of fruits and vegetables may help reduce obesity rates and increase the intake of priority nutrients such as vitamins A,C, folate, potassium, and fiber. The proposed changes would also provide more appropriate amounts of milk and cheese to all women and children and would bring quantities closer in line with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* 2005.

The WIC community has been requesting this change for years and is excited about them. Although there seems to be some challenges related to adding a new food category and introducing a cash-value voucher system, the importance and merits of this recommendation far out weigh the challenges. For these reasons, we strongly support the changes proposed by the USDA for the WIC their food packages.

Prevention - Education -

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Leah Fraser Policy Director

**Please Note Change of Address** 

Latino Health Access

1701 N. Main

Santa Ana, CA 92706